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UNCLAS KINSHASA 000082

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: KINSHASA SHUTS DOWN, NEW MINISTERS SWORN IN ON JAN. 14

REF: A. KINSHASA 63

[B.](#) KINSHASA 23

[C.](#) 1/14/05 E-MAIL MEECE/AF-C GREAT LAKES TEAM

[¶](#)11. (U) SUMMARY: The city of Kinshasa shut down on January 14, following calls for a strike to commemorate protesters killed earlier in the week by police. Despite the "dead city," several new GDRC ministers also took their oath of office on January 14, but MLC officials boycotted the ceremony over an MLC/Presidency dispute. END SUMMARY.

[¶](#)12. (U) The city of Kinshasa effectively shut down on January 14. Aside from a few exceptions, workers remained at home, taxis and other vehicles did not venture out on the roads, and business remained closed all day. (Note: Post maintained normal operations, although few locally-engaged employees were able to find transport to report for work. End Note.) There were no confirmed instances of violence. Earlier in the week, unidentified persons circulated fliers calling for a "ville morte" or city-wide strike to commemorate protesters killed in clashes with police on January 10 (Ref A), and there were several reports of schools and other local establishments receiving unspecified threats if they chose to open on January 14.

[¶](#)13. (U) The GDRC did swear in several newly-appointed ministers on January (Ref B), a ceremony that was particularly noteworthy because all Congolese Liberation Movement (MLC) ministers and vice-ministers reportedly boycotted it. The boycott arose from an ongoing dispute between Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba (leader of the MLC) and President Kabila's political camp, over Ministerial appointments. Bemba is threatening to suspend participation in the transition over the issue, although this dispute appears unrelated to the Kinshasa strike action.

[¶](#)14. (SBU) COMMENT: The January 14 "ville morte" was very effective, largely because the Kinshasa population instinctively chose to hunker down and avoid trouble. While politically embarrassing for GDRC officials such as the Interior Minister and Governor of Kinshasa (both Kabila loyalists who had declared the January 10 protests illegal) political figures outside government such as Etienne Tshisekedi do not appear to have reaped any immediate gain.

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END COMMENT.

[¶](#)15. (U) Bujumbura minimize considered.
MEECE